

For Immediate Release

Offenders Restore a Sense of Purpose for Residents

Greencastle, Indiana - (June 12, 2009) - Offenders from the Putnamville Correctional Facility planted flowers and vegetables outside the Special Care Unit at the Waters Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Greencastle, Indiana.

Horticulture Supervisor Bill Lee, Compost Recycling Supervisor Robert Dixon, offender Frank Guajardo from Crawfordsville, Indiana, and offender Chris McMichael from Elkhart, Indiana surprised residents by showing up with two trucks containing compost, a wheel barrow, roto-tiller, and tools for a beautification project that targeted an area just outside the Special Care Unit of the rehabilitation center. The offenders tilled and fertilized the ground, planted an assortment of wildflowers, grown at the facility as part of the IDOC Heritage Wildflower Program, and planted tomatoes, peppers, and radishes, while residents watched with excited eyes.



Offenders plant flowers and vegetables.

“I didn’t think that this would be that big of a deal, until we arrived and met the residents. Their smiles and hospitality told me right away that this was a big deal! The joy that they had on their faces, just for somebody planting some flowers for them to look at and smell, was all the thanks that I needed. Sometimes the little things make the biggest difference. The whole day was truly a blessing,” said McMichael.

Dixon commended the offenders for their hard work and relayed to staff that the interaction between the offenders and the residents was remarkable to see. Guajardo thanked Dixon and Lee saying, “You trusted me and gave me a chance to help nice people at the home. It gave me a warm feeling in my heart to see their faces light up with smiles, and to do something for someone and not to expect something back in return.”

Sixteen people, diagnosed with some stage of Alzheimer's, currently reside in the Alzheimer's Special Care Unit. "It's amazing to see that such a simple act as watering the flowers each day, has given them a sense of purpose, and a sense of contributing," stated Program Director Stephanie Blevins. "The varied colors of the flowers and the whole growth process seem to be stimulating their mind. Each morning they get up anxious to see if the flowers have bloomed, and to watch them grow."

"It's a step in the right direction when you can evoke empathy and a sense of responsibility for others in offenders. This is not just a life lesson for them, but for all of us...to take responsibility in improving the quality of life for someone other than ourselves. This was an opportunity that I wish every incarcerated individual could have experienced," stated Bruce C. Lemmon, Putnamville Superintendent.

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